

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

1-37. (Canceled)

38. (Previously Presented) An arrangement for serving information requests, comprising:

a plurality of informational servers connected to a communications network, all of the informational servers having a common address on the communications network and serving a set of information to clients, each of the informational servers being configured to receive a transaction request associated with an individual transaction and to provide a response to each transaction request; and

a content director connecting the informational servers to the communications network and distributing transaction requests among the informational servers comprising:

a flow switch that parses plain text transaction requests to locate selected packet payload fields, selects, based on the plain text packet payload fields, an appropriate informational server to service each transaction request, and thereafter forwards at least portions of the parsed transaction requests to a selected one of the informational servers; and

a cryptographic module that decrypts, prior to parsing and informational server selection by the flow switch, cipher text transaction requests and provides plain text transaction requests to the flow switch, wherein, prior to decryption, the cipher text transaction requests have not been routed by another flow switch.

39. (Currently Amended) The arrangement of claim 38, wherein, first and second encrypted transaction requests are received from different clients having a common electronic address and served substantially simultaneously by different informational servers, wherein at least some of the responses include a cookie and a tag ~~identifying a previously selected~~

~~informational server to service transaction requests from the client~~, wherein the cookie ~~and tag~~
~~are~~ is generated by the previously selected informational server, wherein the tag is generated by
the content director, identifies uniquely a corresponding informational server previously selected
to service transaction requests from the client, and is independent of an electronic address
associated with the corresponding informational server, and wherein the flow switch uses the tag
in the parsed plain text equivalent of each transaction request to select an appropriate
informational server to service each of the first and second transaction requests.

40. (Currently Amended) The arrangement of claim 38, wherein the content director further comprises:

a cache that stores a plurality of objects corresponding to transaction requests associated with the plurality of informational servers, the objects comprising a hot ~~invariant~~ table identifying, in each entry, information frequently requested from the informational servers, the hot ~~invariant~~ table including, for each ~~invariant~~ entry in the table identifying corresponding information, a hit counter indicating a number of transaction requests, received over a determined time interval, requesting the corresponding information; and

a cache processor that accesses the plurality of objects in response to communications received from the flow switch.

41. (Currently Amended) The arrangement of claim 40, wherein each ~~invariant~~ in the table further has a corresponding timestamp indicating when the respective entry was last updated, and a tag identifying a corresponding informational server providing the corresponding information.

42. (Currently Amended) The arrangement of claim 40, wherein the content director further comprises:

a digest generator that generates, when the hit counter for an invariantentry indicates at least a threshold transaction request receipt frequency, a digest value pointing to the location in the table where the corresponding entry is stored; and

a digest store that stores the digests corresponding to frequently requested content.

43. (Currently Amended) The arrangement of claim 42, wherein the digest store includes a digest value for each frequently requested invariantentry.

44. (Currently Amended) The arrangement of claim 40, wherein, when the hit counter for an invariant entry indicates at least a threshold transaction request receipt frequency, the information corresponding to the invariant entry is served by a cache informational server and not an origin informational server.

45. (Currently Amended) The arrangement of claim 40, wherein, when the hit counter for an invariantentry falls below a threshold transaction request receipt frequency, the information corresponding to the invariantentry is served by an origin informational server and not a cache informational server.

46. (Currently Amended) The arrangement of claim 42, wherein the digest value is determined according to the following equation:

$L = h(K)$, where $0 \leq L \leq M$, for all keys K , where K is at least a portion of the invariantan electronic address associated with corresponding information, h is the hash function, L is the location of K in the table, and M is the size of the table.

47. (Currently Amended) The arrangement of claim ~~[[38]]~~39, wherein the tag is independent of an electronic address associated with the corresponding informational server and further comprising:

at least one traffic manager located between the content director and one or more clients to effect load balancing across a plurality of content directors.

48. (Currently Amended) The arrangement of claim 38, wherein the content director includes a current connection table listing active connections between servers and clients, the current connection table comprising, for a selected ~~invariant~~electronic address, a session identifier identifying a session with a client, a persistency timestamp indicating when a last transaction request was received from a client for the selected ~~invariant~~electronic address, and cookie name and value.

49. (Previously Presented) The arrangement of claim 38, wherein the flow switch is operable to tag a transaction response, the tag identifying an informational server generating the transaction response.

50. (Previously Presented) The arrangement of claim 49, wherein at least some of the responses include a cookie, wherein the cookie is generated by the informational server previously assigned by the flow switch to service transaction requests from the client, and wherein the cookie is different from the tag.

51. (Previously Presented) The arrangement of claim 50, wherein the tag is concatenated to the cookie.

52. (Currently Amended) The arrangement of claim 50, wherein, during a first time interval, the flow switch is in a tagging mode in which the switch generates and appends tags to transaction responses and, during a second different time interval, the switch operates in a digesting mode in which digests are generated, ~~invariant~~information hotness is monitored, and transaction requests are routed to informational servers based on requested ~~invariant~~information

hotness and/or cookie and wherein, during the first time interval, the flow switch does not operate in the digesting mode and, during the second time interval, the flow switch does not operate in the tagging mode.

53. (Currently Amended) In an arrangement comprising a plurality of informational servers connected to a communications network, all of the informational servers having a common address on the communications network and serving a set of information to clients, each of the informational servers being configured to receive a transaction request associated with an individual transaction and to generate a corresponding response to the transaction request, at least one of the request and response including to tag responses to transaction requests with a packet payload tag identifying uniquely the responding informational server and being an identifier other than an electronic address, and to provide a response to each transaction request, a method for serving transaction requests from clients, comprising:

a cryptographic module decrypting a cipher text transaction request to provide a plain text transaction request to a first flow switch, the plain text transaction requests comprising [[a]]the payload tag;

the first flow switch parsing the plain text transaction request to locate one or more selected fields including the payload tag;

the first flow switch, based on the one or more selected fields, selecting an appropriate informational server to service the transaction request; and

the first flow switch thereafter forwarding at least portions of the plain text transaction request to a selected one of the informational servers, wherein the cipher text transaction request is decrypted prior to the parsing and selecting steps.

54. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 53, wherein an invariant corresponds to an electronic address and further comprising:

receiving first and second encrypted transaction requests from different clients having a common electronic address, the requests being served substantially simultaneously by different informational servers, wherein at least some of the responses include a cookie and payload tag, wherein the cookie ~~and payload tag are~~ was generated by the informational server previously assigned by the first flow switch to service transaction requests from the client and the packet payload tag identifies the previously assigned informational server, wherein the payload tag is an identifier other than an electronic address associated with the respective serving informational server, and wherein the first flow switch uses at least one of the cookie and tag in the parsed plain text equivalent of each transaction request to select an appropriate informational server to service each of the first and second transaction requests.

55. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 53, wherein an invariant corresponds to an electronic address and further comprising:

maintaining a hot invariant table identifying information frequently requested from the informational servers, the hot invariant table including, for each invariant identifying corresponding information, a hit counter indicating a number of transaction requests, received over a determined time interval, requesting the corresponding information; and

accessing the table to select an informational server to service a transaction request for frequently requested information.

56. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 55, wherein each invariant in the table further has a corresponding timestamp indicating when the respective entry was last updated, and [[a]]the payload tag identifying a corresponding informational server providing the corresponding information.

57. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 55, further comprising:
generating, when the hit counter for an invariant indicates at least a threshold transaction request receipt frequency, a digest value pointing to the location in the table where the corresponding entry is stored.

58. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 57, wherein a digest value is generated for each frequently requested invariant.

59. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 55, further comprising:
when the hit counter for an invariant indicates at least a threshold transaction request receipt frequency, directing a transaction request for information associated with the invariant to a cache informational server.

60. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 59, further comprising:
when the hit counter for an invariant falls below a threshold transaction request receipt frequency, directing a transaction request for information associated with the invariant to an origin informational server.

61. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 55, wherein the digest value is determined according to the following equation:

$L = h(K)$, where $0 \leq L \leq M$, for all keys K , where K is at least a portion of the invariant, h is the hash function, L is the location of K in the table, and M is the size of the table.

62. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 53, wherein at least one traffic manager is located between the content director and one or more clients to effect load balancing across a plurality of content directors.

63. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 53, further comprising:
maintaining a current connection table listing active connections between servers and clients, the current connection table comprising, for a selected invariant, a session identifier identifying a session with a client, a persistency timestamp indicating when a last transaction request was received from a client for the selected invariant, and cookie name and value, wherein, prior to the decrypting step, the cipher text transaction request has not been directed to a flow switch other than the first flow switch.

64. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 53, further comprising:
during a first time interval, the first flow switch tagging a transaction response, the packet payload tag identifying an informational server generating the transaction response.

65. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 64, wherein at least some of the responses include a cookie, wherein the cookie is generated by the informational server previously assigned by the first flow switch to service transaction requests from the client, and wherein the cookie is different from the packet payload tag.

66. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 65, wherein the packet payload tag is concatenated to the cookie.

67. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 64, further comprising:
during a second different time interval, generating a digest value for frequently requested information, the digest value indicating a location where an object associated with the frequently requested information is stored;
monitoring the frequency of transaction requests for information; and
directing transaction requests to informational servers based on the frequency of request of information and/or a cookie included in at least some of the transaction requests, wherein,

during the first time interval, the flow switch does not operate in the digesting mode and, during the second time interval, the flow switch does not operate in the tagging mode.

68. (Previously Presented) A computer readable medium comprising instructions to perform the steps of claim 53.

69. (Currently Amended) An arrangement for serving information requests, comprising:

a plurality of informational servers connected to a communications network, all of the informational servers having a common address on the communications network and serving a set of information to clients, each of the informational servers being configured to receive a transaction request associated with an individual transaction, to generate a corresponding [[tag]]cookie identifying uniquely the generating informational server, and to provide a response to each transaction request; and

a content director connecting the informational servers to the communications network and distributing transaction requests among the informational servers comprising:

first flow switching means for (a) parsing plain text transaction requests to locate selected fields including a generated tag, the tag being shorter than the cookie, uniquely identifying an informational server, and being an identifier other than an electronic address, (b) selecting, based at least in part on the generated tag, an appropriate informational server to service each transaction request, and (c) thereafter forwarding at least portions of the parsed transaction requests to a selected one of the informational servers;

decrypting means for decrypting, prior to parsing and informational server selection by the first flow switching means, cipher text transaction requests and providing plain text transaction requests to the first flow switching means, wherein, prior to the decrypting function, the cipher text transaction request has not been directed to a flow switching means other than the first flow switching means.

70. (Currently Amended) The arrangement of claim 69, wherein, first and second encrypted transaction requests are received from different clients having a common electronic address and served substantially simultaneously by different informational servers, wherein at least some of the responses include a cookie and a generated tag, wherein the cookie ~~and generated tag~~ are is generated by the informational server previously assigned by the first flow switching means to service transaction requests from the client, wherein the generated tag is independent of an electronic address associated with the informational server generating the tag and cookie content, and wherein the first flow switching means uses at least one of the cookie and tag in the parsed plain text equivalent of each transaction request to select an appropriate informational server to service each of the first and second transaction requests and wherein the generated tag is in the packet payload.

71. (Currently Amended) The arrangement of claim 69, wherein an invariant corresponds to an electronic address and wherein the content director further comprises:

a cache that stores a plurality of objects corresponding to transaction requests associated with the plurality of informational servers, the objects comprising a hot invariant table identifying information frequently requested from the informational servers, the hot invariant table including, for each invariant identifying corresponding information, a hit counter indicating a number of transaction requests, received over a determined time interval, requesting the corresponding information; and

a cache processor that accesses the plurality of objects in response to communications received from the first flow switching means.

72. (Previously Presented) The arrangement of claim 71, wherein the content director further comprises:

a digest generator that generates, when the hit counter for an invariant indicates at least a threshold transaction request receipt frequency, a digest value pointing to the location in the table where the corresponding entry is stored; and

a digest store that stores the digests corresponding to frequently requested content.

[[74.]]73. (Currently Amended) The arrangement of claim 70, wherein an invariant corresponds to an electronic address, wherein, when the hit counter for an invariant indicates at least a threshold transaction request receipt frequency, the information corresponding to the invariant is served by a cache informational server and not an origin informational server and wherein, when the hit counter for an invariant falls below a threshold transaction request receipt frequency, the information corresponding to the invariant is served by an origin informational server and not a cache informational server.

[[75.]]74. (Currently Amended) The arrangement of claim 72, wherein the digest value is determined according to the following equation:

$L = h(K)$, where $0 \leq L \leq M$, for all keys K , where K is at least a portion of the invariant, h is the hash function, L is the location of K in the table, and M is the size of the table.

[[76.]]75. (Currently Amended) The arrangement of claim 69, wherein the first flow switching means is operable to tag a transaction response, the tag identifying an informational server generating the transaction response, wherein at least some of the responses include a cookie, wherein the cookie is generated by the informational server previously assigned by the first flow switching means to service transaction requests from the client, wherein the cookie is different from the tag, and wherein the tag is concatenated to the cookie.